

VMC Sub-committee Report

DATE: Tuesday, June 21, 2022

WARD: 4

**TITLE: VMC PARKS AND WAYFINDING MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND
ADVANCED SIGNAGE**

FROM:

Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an update on the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan (PWMP), its progress and implementation, and how it contributes to the creation of a complete community in the VMC.

Report Highlights

- The master plan will create a compact, balanced, and meaningful parks and open space network reflective of the urban context within the VMC boundary, with access to larger sporting facilities, trails, and green space nearby.
- The study is concentrating on implementation: when parks can be delivered and how much they will cost, including preparation of a draft of a detailed cost estimate.
- Significant coordination has taken place with, and input provided into, the City's DC background study update, Community Benefit Charge Bylaw study, and Parkland Dedication Bylaw study.
- A VMC parks governance decision-making framework has been developed to help the City identify beneficial opportunities to facilitate the programming, activation, and operations & maintenance of parks and open spaces.
- The consultant has developed and refined potential options for VMC signs, with significant input and evaluation by various City departments.
- A detailed wayfinding procurement process is moving toward fabrication and installation of pilot project signage in select locations in the VMC in Q4 2022.
- Virtual meetings with local landowners and residents took place in March 2022 to gain input into, and support for, the master plan.

Recommendation

1. That the VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan Update and Advanced Signage report be received for information.

Background

The VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan will provide the City with a Parks and Open Space Master Plan that identifies parkland provision gaps, generates recommendations, and prepares a plan that can be implemented in a timely manner to fulfill the VMC parkland target at a mid-to-long term time frame. The PWMP was initiated in May 2020 with the successful proponent, Janet Rosenberg & Studio. A draft Assessment Report, with background research and an evaluation of the parks and open space in the VMC and environs, was presented to the VMC Sub-committee in November 2020.

Building on the findings of the Assessment Report and Phase 1 public engagement process, the PWMP presented parks and open space scenarios to the VMC Sub-committee in March 2021, based on draft design principles and a facility fit study. Park facility requirements were based on projected populations and demographics, and scenarios were studied that looked at parkland opportunities both within and outside the existing VMC boundary.

In June 2021, the study presented a refined scenario that incorporated aspects of the previously reported options, including intensifying parkland within the VMC boundary, expanding north and south, and providing significant parkland in potential boundary expansion study areas.

The study was well received at the Vaughan Design Review Panel in September 2021. Feedback from the panel was incorporated into the master plan.

In November 2021, the study presented continued refinements to the master plan, including creating a three-dimensional model and rendering of the proposed parks and open space system, while also looking at implementation: when parks can be delivered and how much they will cost.

The master plan, which can be implemented over time in a measured response to development, will provide the City with options for service level delivery, and ultimately create a diverse, multi-functional, and seamlessly interconnected parks and open space network.

An innovative and coordinated consultation plan is being undertaken

Current consultation methods are focusing on virtual connections and will be evaluated over time. The initial PWMP survey received over 500 responses, both online and through hard copies, with 75% of survey respondents saying parks and open spaces were most important when considering where to live.

Phase two of the consultation plan took place in May 2021 through virtual focus groups with members of the public. These focus groups were recorded, and the presentation was posted on Have Your Say for a broader engagement with the public over an extended period.

The third phase of consultation on the study took place in November 2021 using the City's Have Your Say platform. The consultant worked with Staff to create an engaging presentation to educate, inform, and generate valuable feedback.

Previous Reports/Authority

Previous reports relating to the VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan can be found at the following links:

[VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan - Implementation Plan November 2021](#)

[VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan Update - Refined Scenario June 2021](#)

[VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan Update March 2021](#)

[VMC Studies Update November 2020](#)

[VMC Studies Update May 2020](#)

Analysis and Options

Growth trends in the VMC are outpacing the provision of social infrastructure, with parkland an area of particular concern. VMC parkland development is lagging with respect to the City's aspirational target of 10 hectares of planned parkland by 2031. It is expected that with growing density additional parkland will need to be secured to provide adequate active and passive recreation facilities to VMC residents, day commuters, and visitors.

In the context of the VMC's growth, the study has identified opportunities to add active parkland and improve the public realm, both within and adjacent to the VMC. The study is a master plan and is being coordinated with the VMC Secondary Plan Update, which will deal with land designation.

The study has continued to refine the master plan, while concentrating on implementation: when parks can be delivered and how much they will cost. A draft of a detailed cost estimate for all VMC parks has been prepared and is being validated by the study's cost consultant. Significant coordination has taken place with, and input provided into, the City's DC background study update, Community Benefit Charge Bylaw study, and Parkland Dedication Bylaw study.

The consultant continues to develop a preliminary framework for recommendations focused on implementation, operations & maintenance, and park governance, and has prepared a draft of the VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan report which is being reviewed and refined.

The consultant has developed, in consultation with Staff, a VMC parks governance decision-making framework to help the City identify beneficial opportunities to facilitate the programming, activation, and operations & maintenance of parks and open spaces in the VMC. As Vaughan's downtown continues to grow, its park programs, activities, and maintenance regimes will also evolve. This framework will allow the City to evaluate opportunities to deliver services in a more efficient manner through relationships with not-for-profit and/or private entities. The governance models explored range from fully City-led initiatives to fully led by a partner.

The master plan will create compact, balanced, and meaningful parks and open spaces within the VMC boundary with access to larger sporting facilities, trails, and green space nearby, while providing the City with options for service level delivery, and will ultimately create a diverse, multi-functional, and seamlessly interconnected parks and open space network. As the majority of parks are development driven, Staff have been partnering with landowners to advance parks where possible.

City Staff continue to coordinate the design of the North and South Urban Parks with each landowner respectively. City Staff are also coordinating the delivery of Edgeley Park, the strata park in the north-east quadrant, which is projected to be open to the public in Q4 of 2022, and Millway Avenue Linear Park, in the south-west quadrant, which is slated to commence construction in Q3 2022.

The study team continues to communicate with external stakeholders about parkland opportunities outside the VMC and work to facilitate future studies of possible active transportation connections beyond the VMC, including with the South York Greenway.

Signage design continues

As part of the strategy to promote the implementation of a diverse, multi-functional, and seamlessly interconnected parks and open space network in the downtown, a signage and wayfinding masterplan and strategy is being developed to help define how residents, visitors, and businesses perceive the VMC and assist them in moving through it.

The first part of the signage and wayfinding component of the study involved the creation of a master plan to incorporate signs in the downtown as it develops; the design of a family of exterior pedestrian and cyclist signs including materials, details, and specifications, as well as determining potential locations of signs.

The consultant has developed and refined potential options for VMC signs, with significant input and evaluation by various City departments. These refined designs will be presented to VMC Sub-committee. This family of signs will address the various needs of the VMC parks and open space network.

The second part of this study, the advanced signage and wayfinding component, involves the creation of a series of prototypes to test the design ideas on site through a pilot project.

Staff and the consultant worked with procurement to develop a Request for Pre-Qualification which ultimately prequalified five potential vendors. Concurrently, the consultant developed a signage tender package. Staff worked with procurement to develop a Request for Quotations which was released to the prequalified vendors on April 11, 2022, and two compliant bids were returned. Staff will work with the consultant and fabricator through the summer and fall to ensure the initial signs are ready for an early Q4 2022 installation.

Wayfinding consultation strategy

Public consultation for the signage and wayfinding component with interested stakeholders will take place soon after installation of the pilot project in early Q4 2022. Staff will make periodic technical reviews for durability during the winter season and stakeholder engagement will continue spring 2023.

Staff is currently developing creative strategies to engage residents and visitors to obtain valuable feedback which will be incorporated in the final report for consideration in future implementation plans. To date the project has gone through a thorough internal review process involving a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprising key City Senior Leadership members, internal Staff from different departments; other agencies such as the TTC, YRT and York Region, and major landowners and developers in the VMC.

Staff will continue to update stakeholders as this project moves forward.

Coordination with related studies

The findings of the PWMP will inform the Community Services & Facilities study to be completed as part of the VMC Secondary Plan Update. The PWMP is being coordinated with the concurrent updates of the VMC Secondary Plan, VMC Transportation Master Plan, and the VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Report.

The parks master plan is targeted for completion in Q2 2022, with prototype signage design and installation continuing through 2022.

Virtual consultation continues

Virtual meetings with local landowners and residents took place in March 2022 to gain input into, and support for, the master plan. Stakeholders will have further opportunities to discuss land designation and park distribution through the VMC Secondary Plan Update.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts resulting from this report. A cost estimate that captures the capital cost for developing the VMC Parks is in progress. This information has been used to reconcile the expected implementation capital cost and available Park DC's, identify any existing funding gaps, and inform the Parkland Dedication Guideline and Parkland Dedication Bylaw.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Collaboration continues with regional stakeholders, which is an important factor in realizing the success of the VMC. Certain options developed through the PWMP will require coordination with regional stakeholders and external agencies to determine their feasibility and advance their implementation.

Conclusion

Building a downtown is an ambitious goal. The average density of development projects continues to increase with new applications, a factor which must be balanced with measured delivery of community services. Active parkland and social infrastructure are critical priorities for the VMC.

The PWMP continues to advance the master plan for the VMC's parks and open spaces, vetted by public and stakeholder input, and coordinated with concurrent VMC studies. The study will ultimately contribute to the downtown's continuing development as a complete and balanced community that is transit supportive and pedestrian friendly, with

a vibrant sense of place, a high-quality public realm, and environmentally sustainable design approaches.

The VMC team continues to collaborate across internal departments, public agencies, residents, landowners, and other stakeholders to deliver a complete community.

For more information, please contact Christina Bruce, Director of Policy Planning and Special Programs, ext. 8231.

Attachments

N/A

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